

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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R 242100Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8182
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2599

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, ES
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT: APRIL 1978

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE MONTH OF APRIL WAS CHIEFLY NOTEWORTHY FOR THE PEACEFUL OCCUPATION BY THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR) OF THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL AND THE VENEZUELAN, COSTA RICAN, PANAMANIA AND SWISS EMBASSIES AS A MEANS OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE GOES IN SAN PEDRO PERULPANA AND OTHER AREAS. ALTHOUGH THE BPR DID NOT SUCCEED IN GETTING ITS DEMANDS MET (GOES PERMISSION FOR THE RETURN OF BPR MEMBERS TO SAN PEDRO PERULPAN AND COJUTEPEQUE AREAS, REMOVAL OF SECURITY FORCES AND ORDEN FROM THESE AREAS, RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS), IT DID CAUSE ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE GOES AND ITS HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE ABROAD. IN EARLY APRIL, CONFRONTATIONS WERE REPORTED IN THE RURAL AREAS AROUND COJUTEPEQUE, WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) ALLEGING THAT ORDEN HAD ATTACKED PDC MEMBERS AND OTHER "CAMPEsinos". PDC AND OTHER
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LAWYERS PRESENTED A PETITION TO THE SUPREME COURT ASKING IT TO DECLARE AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL THE LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER. DISUNITY WITHIN THE HIERARCHY OF THE CHURCH CAME INTO THE OPEN WITH REACTIONS, PRO AND CON, TO A LETTER WRITTEN IN MARCH BY THIRTY PRIESTS WHO DENOUNCED THE PAPAL NUNCIO. APRIL ALSO SAW ITS SHARE OF LABOR DISTURBANCES AND ONE SPECTACULAR

KIDNAPPING OF A MEMBER OF EL SALVADOR'S BUSINESS ELITE.
END SUMMARY.

1. OCCUPATION OF EMBASSIES AND CATHEDRAL: ON APRIL 11 THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC DECLARED ITS INTENTION TO OCCUPY THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL AND THE MEXICAN, VENEZUELAN, COSTA RICAN, PANAMANIAN AND SWISS EMBASSIES IN SAN SALVADOR. THE BPR THEN PROCEEDED TO OCCUPY THE CATHEDRAL AND PANAMANIAN AND VENEZUELAN EMBASSIES ON APRIL 11, THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY ON APRIL 12, AND THE SWISS EMBASSY ON APRIL 13. THE OCCUPATIONS WERE PEACEFUL AND BPR SAID IT WOULD WITHDRAW WHEN ITS DEMANDS (INCLUDING REMOVAL OF SECURITY FORCES AND ORDEN FROM SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AND COJUTEPEQUE AREAS, RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS) WERE MET (SEE SAN SALVADOR 1721, 1754, 1771, 1808). ON APRIL 8, BPR GAVE UP ITS OCCUPATION OF THE CATHEDRAL AND THE EMBASSIES AFTER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CHIEFS OF MISSIONS OF THE AFFECTED EMBASSIES CONDUCTED IN THE ARCHBISHOPRIC. THE BPR FELL OFF THEIR ORIGIANL DEMANDS AND ASKED ONLY THAT OCCUPANTS BE ALLOWED TO RETURN UNMOLESTED BY SECURITY FORCES TO THEIR PLACES OF ORIGIN UNDER RED CROSS PROTECTION. THE GOES AGREED TO THIS AND EVACUATION TOOK PLACE WITHOUT INCIDENT (SAN SALVADOR 1871). DURING AND AFTER THE OCCUPATION OF THE CATHEDRAL AND EMBASSIES, FIVE RADIO STATIONS WERE BRIEFLY TAKEN OVER BY THE POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES (FPL) ON APRIL 15 (SAN CONFIDENTIAL

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SALVADOR 1824); THE EL CALVARIO CHURCH IN SAN SALVADOR WAS OCCUPIED BY THE UNITED POPULAR ACTION FRONT (FAPU) ON APRIL 18 (SAN SALVADOR 1854 AND 1967); AND THE RED CROSS OFFICE IN SAN SALVADOR WAS OCCUPIED BY FAPU ON APRIL 28 (SAN SALVADOR 2154). THE OCCUPATION OF THE CATHEDRAL AND THE EMBASSIES CAUSED ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE GOES, ONE FACTOR BEING THE APPARENT IMPUNITY WITH WHICH THE BPR TOOK OVER THE COSTA RICAN AND SWISS EMBASSIES AFTER HAVING BROADCAST THEIR INTENTION TO DO SO AND IN THE FACE OF GOES SECURITY PRECUATIONS. ALTHOUGH BPR DID NOT SUCCEED IN HAVING ITS DEMANDS MET, IT DID SUCCEED IN DRAWING MAXIMUM PUBLICITY TO ITSELF AND ITS ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE GOES.

2. CONFRONTATIONS IN RURAL AREAS: DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL, SKETCHY REPORTS APPEARED IN THE MEDIA CONCERNING INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE NEAR THE TOWNS OF COJUTEPEQUE AND MONTE SAN JUAN, BOTH IN THE DEPT. OF CUSCATLAN (SAN SALVADOR 1587). OFFICIAL BULLETINS STATED THAT NUMEROUS "CAMPESSINO" FAMILIES HAD ABANDONED THEIR HOMES IN THE AREA IN THE FACE OF ATTACKS BY FECCAS, UTC, AND THE BPR. THE NEWSPAPER "EL DIARIO DE

HOY" STATED THAT FOUR TO FIVE PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE AREA AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NUMEROUS PEOPLE WOUNDED. IN CONTACTS WITH EMBOFFS, LEADERS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) CLAIMED THAT MANY PDC MEMBERS LIVING IN THE AREA HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY MEMBERS OF ORDEN. THEY ADDED THAT SEVERAL OF THESE PDC MEMBERS HAD HAD TO TAKE REFUGE IN THE PDC HEADQUARTERS IN SAN SALADOR AND OTHER LOCATIONS INSIDE THE CITY.

3. KIDNAPPING: GUSTAVO CARTAGENA, PRESIDENT OF ARCO, LARGEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL GROUP OF ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS IN EL SALVADOR, WAS ABDUCTED APRIL 6 FROM HIS OFFICE (DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY) BY A GROUP OF FOUR TO SIX MEN ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS
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(SAN SALVADOR 1676). HE WAS RELEASED UNHARMED THE EVENING OF APRIL 12, REPORTEDLY AFTER PAYMENT OF RANSOM NEGOTIATED BY FAMILY AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATES (SAN SALVADOR 1770). TWO SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATIONS, THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES (FRAP) AND THE WORKERS' REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION (ORT) CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE KIDNAPPING, BUT THERE WERE DOUBTS ABOUT THESE CLAIMS AS CARTAGENA HAD BEEN KNOWN TO BE HAVING ONGOING FEUDS WITH BOTH LABOR AND OTHER BUSINESS GROUPS.

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4. CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS: THE STRAINED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE GOES CONTINUED DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL. DISUNITY WITHIN THE CHURCH HIERARCHY SURFACED OVER A LETTER SENT BY THIRTY PRIESTS IN MARCH TO THE PAPAL NUNCIO, MONSEÑOR EMANUELE GERADA, DENOUNCING HIM FOR HIS VIEWS AND POSITIONS ON VARIOUS MATTERS HAVING TO DO WITH HUMAN RIGHTS (SAN SALVADOR A-36). THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF EL SALVADOR MET ON APRIL 3 TO CONSIDER THE MATTER AND EXPRESSED "CONSTERNATION" OVER THE LETTER. IN A DOCUMENT SIGNED BY FOUR OF EL SALVADOR'S SIX BISHOPS(ONE BISHOP WAS UNAVAILABLE AND ARCHBISHOP ROMERO'S NAME DID NOT APPEAR), THE CONFERENCE CONDEMNED THE "ARROGANT AND IRREVERENT ATTITUDE" OF THE LETTER (SAN SALVADOR A-38). THE BISHOP OF SAN VICENTE ANNOUNCED THE SUSPENSION AS OF APRIL 1 OF THE TEN PRIESTS IN HIS DIOCESE WHO HAD SIGNED THE LETTER TO THE PAPAL NUNCIO (SAN SALVADOR 1680). THIS SERIES OF INCIDENTS LED TO LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS BY THOSE IN FAVOR OF OR
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OPPOSED TO THE NUNCIO AND HELPED TO CREATE FURTHER DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH.

5. OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES: DURING THE WEEK OF APRIL 2, LEADERS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) AND SEVERAL LAWYERS PRESENTED A PETITION TO THE SUPREME COURT ASKING THAT IT DECLARE AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL THE LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER (SAN SALVADOR 1814). ON APRIL 20 THE SUPREME COURT DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE PETITION FOR DELIBERATION. ON APRIL 17 THE NATIONAL POLICE ARRESTED, ALLEGEDLY MISTREATED, AND DETAINED FOR SEVERAL HOURS DR. MARIANELA GARCIA VILLAS, A MEMBER OF THE PDC'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND ONE OF THE SIGNERS OF THE PETITION (SEE MEMCON OF MAY 11).

6. LABOR DISTURBANCES: ON APRIL 1 THE ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND FARMERS (ATACES) DENOUNCED THE MARCH 28 ARREST BY THE NATIONAL GUARD OF ITS TECHNICAL ADVISER, RAMON PORTILLO CHAVEZ. ON APRIL 5 UNION OFFICIALS AT THE TEXTILE PLANT INCA IN SANTA ANA ALLEGED THAT THE COMPANY WAS TRYING TO DESTROY THE UNION THROUGH THE SELECTIVE FIRING OF WORKERS. ON APRIL 14 THE GENERAL

MANAGER OF INCA DISCOVERED A BOMB HAD BEEN PLANTED UNDER HIS CAR; POLICE DISARMED IT. ON APRIL 18 THOUSANDS OF WORKERS BELONGING TO THE UNITED CTNSTRUCTION WORKERS (SUTC) WENT ON STRIKE TO PROTEST THE FACT THAT MANY CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES WERE NOT HONORING THE SALARY INCREASES AND FRINGE BENEFITS INCLUDED IN THE DECISION HANDED DOWN BY A THREE-MAN ARBITRATION TRIBUNAL THE PREVIOUS MONTH (SAN SALVADOR 1978).

7. CHRONOLOGY OF OPPOSITION, TERRORIST AND SECURITY FORCES ACTIVITIES:

APRIL 2 - SECURITY FORCES REPORTED THAT IN COMMEMORATION
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OF THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING, THE POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES (FPL) ENGAGED IN NUMEROUS ACTIVITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY, HADNING OUT LEAFLETS AND PLANTING BOMBS IN TOWNS SUCH AS SAN MIGUEL AND CHALCHUAPA.

APRIL 5 - THE NATIONAL GUARD ANNOUNED THE DISCOVERY ON APRIL 1 OF A FPL CELL IN SANTIAGO NONUALCO (DEPT. OF LA PAZ), ENCOUNTERING MUNITIONS, PROPAGANDA, FLAGS, AND ARMS THAT HAD ONCE BELONGED TO SECURITY FORCES.

APRIL 5 - SECURITY FORCES ALLEGED THAT FPL MEMBERS SHOT AND KILLED SANTOS RODRIGUEZ LEMUS, A NIGHT WATCHMAN, IN THE CITY OF SAN MIGUEL.

APRIL 5 - FIVE FPL MEMBERS REPORTEDLY ASSAULTED A RADIO STATION IN SAN MIGUEL, OCCUPYING IT FOR TWENTY MINUTES AND TRANSMITTING A "SUBVERSIVE" MESSAGE.

APRIL 5 - IN BREAKING UP A GATHERING OF "CAMPEsinOS" NORHT OF SAN SALVADOR, SECURITY FORCES SUFFERED TWO WOUNDED. ONE "CAMPEsINO" WAS REPORTEDLY KILLED.

APRIL 6 - TWO BOMBS (ALLLEGEDLY PLANTED BY THE FPL) EXPLODED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR (UES) IN SAN SALVADOR, SCATTERING LEAFLETS REFERRING TO THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE FPL.

APRIL 12 - THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION "ANDES 21 DE JUNIO" DENOUNCED THE ARREST OF HECTOR RAMON GUARDADO AND CASTILLO CALLES BRAULIO.

APRIL 16 - JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED THAT AS OF THIS DATE, 62 PERSONS HAD BEEN TRIED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER.

APRIL 17 - THE OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER "LA CRONICA DEL PUEBLO" ALLEGED THAT ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 14, THE NATIONAL GUARD CONDUCTED A SURPRISE RAID ON THE TOWN OF SAN FRANCISCO CHINAMEQUITA (DEPT. OF LA PAZ), CAPTURING AND TORTURING SIX "CATECHISTS". ACCORDING TO OTHER PRESS ACCOUNTS, THE NATIONAL GUARD TURNED THE SIX OVER TO THE COURTS FOR HAVING VIOLATED THE LAW OF PUBLIC ORDER BY PASSNG OUT "SUBVERSIVE" PROPAGANDA. FOUR OF THEM WERE RELEASED BY JUDICAL AUTHORITIES ON
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APRIL 21.

APRIL 17 - A GROUP OF LAWYERS AND LAW STUDENTS PRESENTED A PETITION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ASKING FOR AMNESTY FOR THE "CAMPEsinOS" CAPTURED BY THE SECURITY FORCES IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AND OTHER RURAL REAS.

APRIL 18 - A BOMB EXPLOSION OF CONSIDERABLE FORCE OCCURRED ON A SIDEWALK NEAR A HOUSE IN COLONIA ESCALON, ONE OF THE CHIEF RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF SAN SALVADOR, WOUNDING A DOMESTIC SERVANT.

APRIL 20 - JOSE LUIS VILLANUEVA BONILLA WS TURNED OVER TO THE COURTS BY THE POLICIA DE HACIENDA FOR ALLEGEDLY HAVING HELPED TO START NUMEROUS FIRES, INCLUDING SOME IN SAN SALVADOR. POLICE ALLEGED THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR).

APRIL 21 - THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED NATIONALIST DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDN) DENOUNCED THE ARREST OF FIVE PEOPLE, INCLUDING THREE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, ON APRIL 19 BY THE NATIONAL POLICE IN SAN SALVADOR.

APRIL 27 - IN SANTA ANA, MEMBERS OF THE FPL CLAIMED CREDIT FOR PLANTING A BOMB NEAR THE OFFICE OF A LAWYER FOR THE TEXTILE COMPANY INCA AND ALSO FOR PLANTING ONE UNDER THE CAR OF AN EXECUTIVE OF INCA. BOTH BOMBS MISFIRED, CAUSING ONLY MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE. INCA HAS HAD A LONG HISTORY OF LABOR PROBLEMS.

APRIL 27 - IN SAN SALVADOR, FOUR UNARMED AND OUT-OF-UNIFORM MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE TRIED TO ARREST A PERSON HANDING OUT PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS AT A BUS TERMINAL. THE PERSON, PRESUMED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE UNITED POPULAR ACTION FRONT (FAPU), OPENED FIRE, KILLING TWO AND WOUNDING ONE OF THE FOUR POLICEMEN. DEVINE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANSAA02599
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780219-1002
Format: TEL
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780523/aaaaatnc.tel
Line Count: 322
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2585926
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT: APRIL 1978 BEGIN SUMMARY. THE MONTH OF APRIL WAS CHIEFLY NOTEWORTHY FOR THE PEACEFUL OCCUPATION BY THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONA
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, ES
To: STATE
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Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014